



Trauma-Informed Considerations for Anti-Trafficking Efforts in the COVID-19 Environment, its Aftermath, and in the Context of Possible Future Pandemics



★★★ Victim Identification & Trafficking Investigations ★★★

While all anti-trafficking efforts should be trauma-informed, it is especially important that anti-trafficking efforts during a pandemic apply a trauma-informed approach. The following is a series of recommendations to achieve safety, transparency, mutual self-help, collaboration, empowerment, and cultural responsiveness to address pandemic-related barriers. While the COVID-19 pandemic warrants special consideration, what has been helpful prior to the pandemic is clearly even more important now.

- ★ Inform victims of changes in law enforcement processes and court activities in response to COVID-19, including the option to meet with investigators and other law enforcement personnel virtually, the option to testify virtually if available, as well as the option to decline testifying as appropriate.
- ★ Reduce court backlogs by leveraging technology to allow for continuous workflow while social distancing or telework guidelines are in place.
- ★ Implement routine trainings on trauma-informed topics, including but not limited to: recognizing trauma triggers associated with social isolation and masking; domestic and interpersonal violence incident response; trauma-informed interviewing techniques; crisis intervention; and gender responsiveness.
- ★ Develop or increase bi-directional community-wide communication systems to ensure both the community and law enforcement are aware of the available services for victims in their jurisdiction, as well as informed about any service changes or disruptions that could impact referrals or ongoing investigations.
- ★ Evaluate and improve procedures to address and eliminate discriminatory practices against individuals based on factors such as immigration status, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.
- ★ Work to bolster crime victim compensation and restitution so that access to these essential services is not adversely affected by geopolitical borders impacted by travel restrictions.
- ★ Employ subject matter experts as key consultants and staff to inform policy and procedure development and engage victims and survivors through new outreach methods, such as social media campaigns to increase awareness and identify victims.



- ★ Provide consistent messaging from leadership about the risks to anti-trafficking professionals of vicarious trauma and ensure accessible mental health support services given the potential negative consequences of responding to a greater number of incidents.
- ★ Ensure that when law enforcement officers are working remotely or from home, they are able to do so through secure, dedicated, and reliable internet and technology resources.

These considerations were developed by consultants for the Human Trafficking Expert Consultant Network funded by the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. The purpose of the Network is to engage experts, particularly those with lived experience of human trafficking, to provide expertise and input on Department of State anti-trafficking policies, strategies, and products. The authors, Megan Lundstrom and Jennifer Roman-Martin, have a range of expertise related to human trafficking, marginalized communities, service provision, and trauma.

